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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AS-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 /057 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2408
INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 0877

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PGOV PINT PORS PP
SUBJ: PNG NATIONAL ELECTIONS: ATMOSPHERICS BEFORE THE TALLY

1. THE VOTING PERIOD FOR THE PNG NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS TAKES THREE WEEKS, FROM 18 JUNE TO 9 JULY, WITH POLLING TEAMS STARTING IN THE MAJOR TOWNS AND THEN SPREADING OUT TO THE MORE REMOTE RURAL CENTERS. CONSIDERING THE LOW LEVEL OF LITERACY, THE FORMIDABLE TERRAIN TO BE COVERED BY POLLING OFFICERS, THE LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND THE FACT THAT THIS IS THE FIRST NATIONAL ELECTION AFTER INDEPENDENCE, THE PROCESS OVERALL HAS BEEN A SMOOTH ONE, BARRING A FEW INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE MARRED IT.

2. NEVERTHELESS, THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION HAS COME UNDER CRITICISM FOR NOT HAVING PHOTOGRAPHS OF OVER 90 PER CENT OF THE CANDIDATES PRINTED ON THE RESPECTIVE BALLOTS FOR EACH DISTRICT (A MAJOR CONSIDERATION WITH A POPULATION THAT IS 85 PER CENT ILLITERATE), FOR RUNNING SHORT OF BALLOTS AT CERTAIN POLLING CENTERS AND FOR UNREASONABLE DELAYS FOR VOTERS AT OTHERS, AND LASTLY FOR THE CONFUSED STATE OF THE ELECTORAL ROLLS. (PRIME MINISTER SOMARE WAS LISTED UNDER
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M FOR MICHAEL AND HIS WIFE WAS NOT ON THE ELECTORAL ROLL DESPITE HAVING PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED.)

3. IN A SMALL NUMBER OF ELECTORATES, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE TENSION AS A RESULT OF THE CLASH OF PERSONALITIES INVOLVED. IN THE CHIMBU PROVINCE, THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PROVINCIAL SEAT HAS BECOME HEATED BETWEEN THE SITTING MEMBER, IAMBAKI OKUK,

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AND THE PANGU-ENDORSED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, KOBALE KALE. KALE SPENT AT LEAST ONE DAY IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY IN JAIL AFTER HAVING KILLED A 5-YEAR-OLD GIRL IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT, WHICH HAS ALREADY RESULTED IN A PAYBACK KILLING OF ONE OF KALE'S NEAR RELATIVES. KALE HIMSELF IS ALLEGEDLY STILL A TARGET FOR A PAYBACK KILLING. IN BOUGAINVILLE, SHOULD A MAINLANDER "REDSKIN" CANDIDATE WIN OVER BOUGAINVILLEANS, IT COULD RESULT IN DISTURBANCES THERE. ALSO, THE MATAUNGAN ASSOCIATION IS NOT BEYOND TAKING TO THE STREETS IF THEIR CANDIDATES FARE BADLY IN RABAUL, EAST NEW BRITAIN.

4. BUT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TENSION UNDOUBTEDLY EXISTS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL DISTRICT FIGHT BETWEEN JOSEPHINE ABAIJAH (PAPUS BESENA) AND SIR MAORI KIKI (PANGU), MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS KIKI AND ABAIJAH HAVE BEEN AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS OVER SUCH ISSUES AS PNG UNITY VERSUS PAPUA SECESSION AND CRITICISM BY ABAIJAH THAT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING KIKI, HAS DONE NOTHING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAPUA. THERE ARE WIDESPREAD ALLEGATIONS OF DOUBLE VOTING, ASSERTIONS THAT PANGU-INCLINED POLLING OFFICERS CHECKED OFF KIKI'S NAME REGARDLESS OF THE NAME WHISPERED TO THEM BY ILLITERATE VOTES, CLAIMS OF BALLOT BOX STUFFICG, AND A CONFIRMED RUMOR THAT KIKI DEMANDED AND OBTAINED THE EARLY CLOSING OF SEVERAL POLLING BOOTHS IN PAPUA BESENA-DOMINATED AREAS. WHILE PAPUA BESENA AND THE UNITED PARTY HAVE ALSO BEEN CHARGED WITH SUCH CONFIDENTIAL

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OFFENSES, PRIMARY CRITICISM IS DIRECTED AT THE PANGU PARTY ORGANIZATION IN PORT MORESBY SUPPORTING THE KIKI CAMPAIGN. THERE IS A WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT JOSEPHONE ABAIJAH SHOULD WIN. CONCURRENTLY, THERE IS ALSO WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT THE ACTUAL VOTE COULD GO TO KIKI DUE TO ELECTION FRAUD BY THE PANGU PARTY MACHINE. SOME BELIEVE THAT IF KIKI WINS, DISTURBANCES WILL BREAK OUT IN PORT MORESBY AND THAT PAPUA BESENA WILL ALSO TAKE THE ISSUE TO THE COURTS.

5. COMMENT: KIKI'S IMAGE COULD BE TARNISHED REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTING. DESPITE OUR EMPHASIS ON THESE ROUGH SPOTS, THE ELECTION IN GENERAL IS GOING SMOOTHLY AND THE RETURNS FOR MOST ELECTORATES SHOULD BE IN WITHIN THE WEEK.
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